

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic communications system comprising:

means for sending messages in accordance with a first communication medium;

means for defining a plurality of rules to apply to said messages, said rules defined by subscribers of an access;

means at said access service for applying at least one of said plurality of rules to convert at least one of said messages in accordance with said first communication medium to a message in accordance with a second communication medium, said means for applying adapted to apply said at least one of said plurality of rules upon receipt of said first communication medium;

means for retrieving said converted message in accordance with said second communication medium; and

means for responding immediately to said converted message by sending a reply message in accordance with a third communication medium.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said first communication medium is selected from the group of voice mail, electronic mail, and fax mail.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein said second communication medium is selected from the group of voice mail, electronic mail, and fax mail.
4. The system of claim 1 wherein said plurality of rules are defined in accordance with filter and forward options applicable to said messages in accordance with said first communication medium.
5. The system of claim 4 further comprising immediate filter and forward options.

6. The system of claim 5 further comprising store and forward options.
7. The system of claim 1 wherein said plurality of rules comprise sender and receiver options.
8. The system of claim 1 wherein said access service is selected from the group consisting of Internet Service Provider and telecommunications service provider.
9. A method for communicating electronically comprising the steps of:
  - defining a plurality of rules to apply to messages in different communication media, said rules defined by subscribers of an access service;
  - composing and sending a plurality of messages in accordance with a first communication medium;
  - applying a rule to convert at least one of said messages in accordance with a first communication medium to a message in accordance with a second communication medium, said rule applied upon receipt of said at least one of said messages at said access service;
  - retrieving said converted message in accordance with said second communication medium; and
  - at the option of the recipient of said converted message, responding immediately to said converted message by sending a reply message in accordance with a third communication medium.
10. The method of claim 9 wherein said first communication medium is selected from the group of electronic mail, voice mail, and fax mail.
11. The method of claim 9 wherein said second communication medium is selected from the group of electronic mail, voice mail, and fax mail.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein said plurality of rules comprise filter and forward options applicable to said messages in accordance with said first communication medium.
13. The method of claim 12 wherein said filter and forward options comprise immediate filter and forward options.
14. The method of claim 12 wherein said filter and forward options comprise store and forward options.
15. The method of claim 9 wherein said plurality of rules comprise sender and receiver options.
16. A cross-media communication system comprising:
  - a computer network for providing telecommunications services, said telecommunications services comprising voice and fax messaging capabilities;
  - a telephone access interface for sending and receiving voice and fax messages via said computer network for providing said telecommunications services;
  - an electronic mail gateway for receiving electronic mail messages from an information service, said electronic mail messages received in accordance with rules defined by subscribers of said information service and applied to said electronic mail messages by said information service upon receipt of said electronic mail messages; and
  - means for accessing said electronic mail messages using said telephone access interface.

17. The system of claim 16 further comprising a means for applying rules to said voice and fax messages.
18. The system of claim 17 further comprising a means for receiving from said information service said rules to apply to said voice, fax, and electronic mail messages.
19. The system of claim 17 wherein said electronic mail messages and said voice and fax messages are delivered in accordance with said rules applied to said electronic mail messages and said rules applied to said voice and fax messages.
20. The system of claim 17 further comprising rules for cross-media notification and cross-media responses.
21. The system of claim 16 wherein said means for receiving electronic mail messages comprises a dedicated connection to said information service and a means for polling via said dedicated connection a mailbox at said information service.
22. The system of claim 21 wherein said electronic mail messages are forwarded by said information service to said mailbox in accordance with said rules applied to said electronic mail messages by said information service.

23. A cross-media communication system comprising:

a computer network for providing information services to a plurality of subscribers;

a graphical user interface for use by said subscribers to access and interact with said computer network providing said information services;

an electronic mail gateway for receiving from a telecommunications service voice mail and fax mail messages addressed to said subscribers, said voice mail and fax mail messages received from said telecommunications service in accordance with rules applied to said voice mail and fax messages upon receipt at said telecommunications service;

an audio player for playing said voice mail messages, said audio player accessible from said graphical user interface;

a fax viewer for viewing said fax messages, said fax viewer accessible from said graphical user interface; and

a means for immediately responding to said voice mail messages and said fax messages, via voice mail, electronic mail, or fax.

24. The system of claim 23 further comprising a means for defining and storing rules to apply to said electronic, voice, and fax mail messages.
25. The system of claim 24 wherein said rules comprise cross-media notification rules.
26. The system of claim 24 wherein said electronic, voice, and fax mail messages are delivered in accordance with said rules.
27. The system of claim 23 wherein said telecommunications service forwards inbound voice mail and fax mail messages to an information service mailbox.

28. The system of claim 23 further comprising a means for notifying said subscribers when voice mail and fax mail messages addressed to them have been received from said telecommunications service, by sending alerts to any e-mail address, pager, or fax machine of said subscribers.
29. An information service network for rendering voice mail messages accessible to a plurality of subscribers, said network comprising:
- an electronic mail gateway for receiving electronic mail messages from a telecommunications network, said electronic mail messages comprising audio files with voice mail messages originating from said telecommunications network and said electronic mail messages received from said telecommunications service in accordance with rules applied to said voice mail messages upon receipt at said telecommunications service; and
  - connection software for use by said subscribers to establish a connection to said information service network, to retrieve said electronic mail messages, to play said audio files, and to respond immediately to said electronic mail messages.
30. An information service network according to claim 29 in which the information service network is further adapted to inform subscribers when voice mail messages addressed to them have been received by the information service network, by sending alerts to any e-mail address, pager, or fax machine of the subscribers.

31. An information service network for rendering fax mail messages accessible to a plurality of subscribers, said network comprising:

an electronic mail gateway for receiving electronic mail messages from a telecommunications network, said electronic mail messages comprising files with fax mail messages originating from said telecommunications network and said electronic mail messages received from said telecommunications network in accordance with rules applied to said fax mail messages upon receipt at said telecommunications network; and

connection software for use by said subscribers to establish a connection to said information service, to retrieve said electronic mail messages, to view said fax mail message files, and to respond immediately to said fax mail messages via electronic mail or fax.

32. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of subscribers, comprising:

providing a plurality of communications lines, the communications lines assigned to the plurality of subscribers;

assigning mailboxes to the plurality of subscribers;

receiving a fax intended for a subscriber;

converting the fax to a data file;

storing the data file in the mailbox assigned to the subscriber for later retrieval by the subscriber; and

providing the subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon such later retrieval.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

providing the capability for the subscriber to retrieve the data file by dialing in with a telephone.

34. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving a fax intended for an access service subscriber;

converting the fax to a data file;

providing the capability for the access service subscriber to retrieve the data file by dialing in with a telephone; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon such retrieval.

35. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving a fax intended for an access service subscriber;

converting the fax to a data file;

sending the data file to the access service subscriber via email; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon receiving the data file.



36. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving a fax intended for an access service subscriber;

converting the fax to a data file;

downloading the data file to the access service subscriber's computer access message repository box for later retrieval by the access service subscriber in a subscriber-selected media; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon such later retrieval.

37. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

receiving an audio file attached to the fax; and

downloading the audio file to the access service subscriber's computer access message repository box.

38. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

receiving an audio file attached to the fax; and

sending the data file and the audio file to the access service subscriber via email.

39. The method of claim 36, wherein the access service subscriber's computer access message repository box is located at an Internet Service Provider which provides Internet access to the access service subscriber.

40. The method of claim 36, further comprising:

sending an alert to a telephone that a fax is waiting at the computer access message repository box.

41. The method of claim 36, further comprising:  
sending an alert to a pager that a fax is waiting at the computer access message repository box.
42. The method of claim 36, further comprising:  
sending an alert to the access service subscriber via email that a fax is waiting at the computer access message repository box.
43. The method of claim 36, further comprising:  
redirecting the fax to an alternate fax number.
44. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:  
receiving a fax intended for an access service subscriber;  
providing the access service subscriber with the capability to annotate the data file with an audio file; and  
providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon receiving the fax.
45. The method of claim 44, further comprising:  
converting the fax to a data file; and  
sending the data file and the audio file to any specified fax number.
46. The method of claim 44, further comprising:  
sending the fax and the audio file to any specified fax number.

47. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a universal mailbox, comprising:

providing the capability of defining a set of rules by an access service subscriber to handle received faxes;

receiving a fax intended for the access service subscriber;

applying the set of rules to the fax; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon receiving the fax.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein the set of rules includes storing the fax in the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the set of rules includes:

converting the fax to a fax data file; and

downloading the fax data file to the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

50. The method of claim 48, wherein the set of rules includes forwarding the fax to a specified fax number.

51. The method of claim 48, wherein the set of rules includes sending an alert to the access service subscriber via email that a fax mail is waiting at the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

52. The method of claim 48, wherein the set of rules includes sending an alert to the access service subscriber's pager that a fax mail is waiting at the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

53. The method of claim 48, wherein the set of rules includes converting any attached voice mail into an audio file.
54. The method of claim 47, wherein the providing step includes providing the capability to the access service subscriber via a client software application program.
55. The method of claim 54, wherein the client software application program is a web browser.
56. The method of claim 47, wherein the providing step includes providing the capability to the access service subscriber via telephone.
57. A method of providing integrated data services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:
- receiving an email for an access service subscriber;
  - receiving a fax telephone number from the access service subscriber;
  - sending the email as a fax to the fax telephone number; and
  - providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the email upon receiving the fax.
58. The method of claim 57, wherein the fax telephone number is received prior to receiving the email.
59. The method of claim 57, wherein the fax telephone number is received after receiving the email.

60. A method of managing messages in a client computer for an access service subscriber, comprising:

receiving an indication of a fax that is received at a mailbox designated for the access service subscriber;

sending the fax delivery request to the mailbox so that the fax will be delivered to a designated fax telephone number; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the fax upon receiving the fax.

61. A method of providing integrated data services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving email intended for an access service subscriber;

sending the email as a fax to the access service subscriber; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the email upon receiving the fax.

62. The method of claim 61, further comprising:

determining a fax telephone number associated with the access service subscriber.

63. A method of providing integrated data services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving email intended for an access service subscriber;

converting the email to an audio file using text-to-speech conversion;

and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the email upon receiving the audio file.

64. The method of claim 63, further comprising:  
storing the audio file in a mailbox associated with the access service subscriber for later retrieval.
65. The method of claim 63, wherein the step of converting occurs immediately after the email is received.
66. The method of claim 63, wherein the step of converting occurs when a conversion request is received.
67. The method of claim 66, wherein the conversion request is received via a telephone line.
68. The method of claim 66, wherein the conversion request is received via a web browser.
69. The method of claim 63, further comprising:  
providing the capability to listen to the audio file.
70. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:  
receiving email intended for an access service subscriber from an email sender;  
providing the capability for the access service subscriber to record a voice message or create a fax; and  
sending the voice message or fax to the email sender as a response.

71. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving email from an email sender intended for an access service subscriber;

receiving an audio file from the access service subscriber; and

sending the audio file to the email sender in response to the email.

72. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:

receiving email from an email sender intended for an access service subscriber;

providing the capability for the access service subscriber to automatically record a voice message upon receipt of the email;

attaching the voice message to the email; and

forwarding the email with the attached voice message to another email address.

73. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving email from an email sender intended for an access service subscriber;

receiving an audio file from the access service subscriber; and

automatically forwarding the email with the audio file to a target email address upon receipt of the audio file.

74. The method of claim 73, further comprising:

receiving a forwarding request from the access service subscriber; and

receiving a target email address from the access service subscriber.

75. The method of claim 74, wherein the target email address is received before the email from the email sender is received.
76. The method of claim 74, wherein the target email address is received after the email from the email sender is received.
77. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:  
receiving email intended for an access service subscriber from an email sender;  
automatically retrieving the email sender's telephone number upon receipt of the email; and  
automatically dialing the email sender's telephone number to reply to the email message upon retrieval of such telephone number.
78. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:  
receiving email from an email sender intended for an access service subscriber;  
automatically retrieving an access service subscriber's personal alert number upon receipt of the email; and  
automatically dialing the access service subscriber's personal alert number to notify the access service subscriber of the received email upon retrieval of such personal alert number.
79. The method of claim 78, wherein the access service subscriber's personal alert number is a home telephone number.
80. The method of claim 78, wherein the access service subscriber's personal alert number is a cellular telephone number.



81. The method of claim 78, wherein the access service subscriber's personal alert number is a pager number.
82. The method of claim 81, further comprising:
- sending the text of the email to the access service subscriber's pager number.
83. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:
- receiving email from an email sender intended for an access service subscriber;
  - automatically retrieving the access service subscriber's pager number or fax number; and
  - automatically sending an alert to the access service subscriber's pager number or fax number to indicate that an email has been received upon retrieval of such number or fax number.
84. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a universal mailbox, comprising:
- providing the capability of defining a set of rules by an access service subscriber to handle received voice messages;
  - receiving a voice message intended for the access service subscriber;
  - applying the set of rules to the voice message; and
  - providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the voice message via email, fax, or pager number upon receiving the voice message.

85. The method of claim 84, wherein the set of rules includes storing the voice message in the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.
86. The method of claim 84, wherein the set of rules includes:
- converting the voice message into a text data file; and
  - downloading the text data file to the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.
87. The method of claim 86, wherein the set of rules includes sending the text data file to a specified fax number.
88. The method of claim 86, wherein the set of rules includes sending the text data file to a specified email address.
89. The method of claim 86, wherein the set of rules includes sending the text data file to a specified pager number.
90. The method of claim 84, further comprising:
- converting the voice message into an audio file.
91. The method of claim 90, further comprising:
- sending the audio file to the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.
92. The method of claim 90, further comprising:
- sending the audio file to the access service subscriber's email address.
93. The method of claim 91, wherein the set of rules includes sending an alert to the access service subscriber via email that a voice message is waiting at the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

94. The method of claim 91, wherein the set of rules includes sending an alert to the access service subscriber's pager that a voice message is waiting at the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.
95. The method of claim 84, wherein the providing step includes providing the capability to the access service subscriber via a client software application program.
96. The method of claim 95, wherein the client software application program is a web browser.
97. The method of claim 84, wherein providing the capability of defining step includes providing such capability to the access service subscriber via telephone.
98. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a universal mailbox, comprising:
- receiving a voice mail from a caller and intended for an access service subscriber;
  - converting the voice mail into an audio file;
  - downloading the audio file to the access service subscriber's universal mailbox; and
  - providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the voice mail via email, fax, or pager number upon receiving the voice mail.

99. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending the audio file to the access service subscriber upon demand  
by the access service subscriber.

100. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending the audio file to the access service subscriber via an email.

101. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending an alert to a pager that the voice mail is waiting at the access  
service subscriber's universal mailbox.

102. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending an alert to a telephone that the voice mail is waiting at the  
access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

103. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending an alert to a fax telephone number that the voice mail is  
waiting at the access service subscriber's universal mailbox.

104. The method of claim 98, further comprising:

    sending an email to the access service subscriber to alert the access  
service subscriber that the voice mail is waiting at the access service  
subscriber's universal mailbox.

105. A method of providing integrated telecommunications services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a universal mailbox, comprising:

- receiving a voice mail from a caller and intended for an access service subscriber;

- converting the voice mail into a text file using speech-to-text conversion;

- downloading the text file to the access service subscriber's universal mailbox; and

- providing the access service subscriber with the capability to respond immediately to the voice mail via email, fax, or pager number upon receiving the voice mail.

106. The method of claim 105, further comprising:

- sending the text file as an email to the access service subscriber.

107. The method of claim 105, further comprising:

- sending the text file to a pager.

108. The method of claim 105, further comprising:

- sending the text file as a fax to any fax number.

109. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:

- receiving voice mail intended for an access service subscriber from a caller;

- providing the capability for the access service subscriber to record a voice message; and

- sending the voice message to the caller as a response.

110. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, comprising:

receiving a voice mail from a caller intended for an access service subscriber;

receiving an audio file from the access service subscriber; and

automatically sending the audio file to the caller in response to the voice mail upon receipt of the audio file.

111. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:

receiving a voice mail from a caller intended for an access service subscriber;

providing the capability for the access service subscriber to automatically record a voice message upon receipt of the voice mail;

attaching the voice message to an email; and

forwarding the email with the attached voice message to a target email address.

112. The method of claim 111, further comprising:

receiving a forwarding request from the access service subscriber; and

receiving a target email address from the access service subscriber.

113. The method of claim 112, wherein the target email address is received before the voice mail from the caller is received.

114. The method of claim 112, wherein the target email address is received after the voice mail from the caller is received.

115. A method of managing messages in a client computing system, comprising:
- receiving a voice mail intended for an access service subscriber from a caller;
  - automatically retrieving the caller's telephone number upon receipt of the voice mail; and
  - automatically dialing the caller's telephone number to reply to the voice mail upon retrieval of such telephone number.
116. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:
- receiving a message of a particular type intended for an access service subscriber, wherein the type is selected from the group consisting of voice message, email, and fax, and at least two different types are supported;
  - storing the message in the access service subscriber's mailbox;
  - providing the access service subscriber the capability of reviewing the message in the mailbox; and
  - providing the access service subscriber the capability of responding immediately to the message via voice message, email, or fax.
117. The method of claim 116, wherein the capabilities of reviewing and responding to the message are provided via computer access dial in.
118. The method of claim 116, wherein the capability is provided via telephone and dual tone multiple frequency (DTMF) format.
119. The method of claim 116, further comprising:
- providing a directory of telephone numbers.

120. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
providing a directory of fax numbers.
121. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
providing a directory of email addresses.
122. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
providing a directory of telephone numbers and fax numbers.
123. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
providing a directory of telephone numbers and email addresses.
124. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
providing a directory of fax numbers and email addresses.
125. The method of claim 116, wherein the message includes a heading and the providing step includes providing the capability of reviewing the heading of the message.
126. The method of claim 116, wherein the providing step includes providing the capability for the access service subscriber to determine the contents of the message in a format desired by the access service subscriber, wherein the format is selected from the group consisting of voice message, fax, and email, and at least two of the formats are supported.
127. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
sending an email of the message to the access service subscriber's email address.
128. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
determining the type of the message; and  
converting the message into a text file if the type is voice.



129. The method of claim 128, further comprising:  
    sending the text file to a predetermined pager number.
130. The method of claim 128, further comprising:  
    sending the text file as an email to a predetermined email address.
131. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
    determining the type of the message; and  
    converting the message into an audio file if the type is email.
132. The method of claim 131, further comprising:  
    storing the audio file in the mailbox for later retrieval.
133. The method of claim 131, further comprising:  
    receiving a request from the access service subscriber to listen to the  
audio file; and  
    sending the audio file to the access service subscriber.
134. The method of claim 131, further comprising:  
    sending the audio file as an email to a predetermined email address.
135. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
    receiving a request to listen to the message;  
    determining the type of the message; and  
    converting the message into an audio file if the type is email.
136. The method of claim 116, further comprising:  
    determining the type of the message; and  
    converting the message into a data file if the type is fax.
137. The method of claim 136, further comprising:  
    sending the data file as an email to the access service subscriber.

138. The method of claim 116, further comprising:

sending the fax to a predetermined fax number.

139. A method of providing communication services to a plurality of access service subscribers, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

handling a message of a particular type intended for an access service subscriber, wherein the type is selected from the group consisting of voice message, email, and fax, and at least two different types are supported;

storing the message in the access service subscriber's mailbox;

providing the access service subscriber the capability of responding immediately to the message via voice message, email, or fax; and

providing billing information of the communication services to the access service subscriber upon demand.

140. The method of claim 139, wherein the providing billing information step includes:

providing billing information on-line across the Internet to a client software application.

141. The method of claim 140, wherein the client software application is a web browser.

142. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

receiving an email intended for the access service subscriber;

storing the email in the mailbox;

sending an alert to the access service subscriber via pager, fax, or telephone to notify the access service subscriber that the email has been received; and

providing the access service subscriber with the capability of responding immediately to the email via voice message, email, or fax.

143. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

receiving an email intended for the access service subscriber;

storing the email in the mailbox; and

sending a trigger to an alerting mechanism via email, fax or telephone so that the alerting mechanism can send an alert to the access service subscriber to notify the access service subscriber that the email has been received.

144. The method of claim 143, wherein the alert is sent via pager.
145. The method of claim 143, wherein the alert is sent via fax.
146. The method of claim 143, wherein the alert is sent via telephone.

147. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

receiving a fax intended for the access service subscriber;

storing the fax in the mailbox; and

sending an alert to the access service subscriber via voice message, email, or fax to notify the access service subscriber that the fax has been received.

148. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

receiving a fax intended for the access service subscriber;

storing the fax in the mailbox; and

sending a trigger to an alerting mechanism via email, fax, or telephone

so that the alerting mechanism can send an alert to the access service subscriber to notify the access service subscriber that the fax has been received.

149. The method of claim 148, wherein the alert is sent via pager.

150. The method of claim 148, wherein the alert is sent via email.

151. The method of claim 148, wherein the alert is sent via telephone.

152. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

- receiving a voice mail intended for the access service subscriber;
- storing the voice mail in the mailbox; and
- sending an alert to the access service subscriber via email, fax, or telephone to notify the access service subscriber that the voice mail has been received.

153. The method of claim 152, wherein the alert is sent via pager.

154. The method of claim 152, wherein the alert is sent via fax.

155. The method of claim 152, wherein the alert is sent via telephone.

156. The method of claim 152, wherein the alert is sent via email.

157. A method of providing notification of the receipt of a message for an access service subscriber, each access service subscriber having a mailbox, comprising:

- receiving a voice mail intended for the access service subscriber;
- storing the voice mail in the mailbox; and
- sending a trigger to an alerting mechanism via email, fax, or telephone so that the alerting mechanism can send an alert to the access service subscriber to notify the access service subscriber that the voice mail has been received.